the Bridge
NEWSLETTER of the BRITISH COLUMBIA
FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY PROGRAM

St. Mary's Indian Band Develops Integrated Resource Management Strategy

The St. Mary's Indian Band, also known as Aqamnik, or "people of the forest," is located north of Cranbrook in southeastern BC and is the home to approximately 276 band members. The band council recognizes that their most important renewable resource are its members, and in particular, their youth. Approximately one-half of these people are under the age of fifty.

Vickie Thomas, the band administrator, explains that, "In the past, forestry has been quite a factor in the community. However, over the last five to ten years there hasn't been anything happening in terms of forestry activities. The band is in the treaty process and the community is looking long term at managing their own lands and resources, starting with their reserve lands."

continued

Forestry technicians collecting field inventory information to update their 1988 Forest Management Plan.

October 2001

Canada

St. Mary's Indian Band

A forestry technician reviewing map information.

Presently there are eleven people from the surrounding communities that are enrolled in the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology's Integrated Resource Management Program. Three forest technicians, graduates of the diploma program, are conducting a resource assessment of the St. Mary's Indian Reserve, approximately 5000 hectares of forest and grassland. The assessment focuses mainly on the quality and quantity of the forested and open range as well as other values such as identifying wildlife habitat, ungulate corridors, and traditional-use locations. The new information will form the basis of developing a current land management plan. The band's forest technicians will do this work with the assistance of a professional forester and a professional agrologist.

This year, the goal of the band is to develop an integrated resource management strategy that will coordinate economic activities and utilize reserve land resources with minimal negative environmental impacts. With support from the First Nations Forestry Program, the band will update their 1988 Forest Management Plan. This information will be used as a management tool to guide land use and sustainable resource extraction activities in order to meet commercial challenges while at the same time contributing towards resource development and creating employment.

Contact: Vickie Thomas, Band Administrator, St. Mary's Indian Band, (250) 426-5717.

Working Towards Economic Stability Through Forestry

The Kitselas First Nation is located just outside the city of Terrace on the banks of the Skeena River in northwestern BC. Forestry has traditionally been a main source of employment for the Kitselas community, but setbacks and cutbacks since the 1980s as well as the more recent problems of Skeena Cellulose Inc. (SCI) resulted in limited forest sector opportunities.

With the assistance of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) in 2000/01, the Kitselas community was able to establish a full-time Community Economic Development Office and work towards re-establishing forestry as an economic mainstay of the community.

"Unemployment in the Kitselas Nation has increased over the past few years to between 70 and 80 percent," states Alfie McDames, Kitselas Community Economic Development Officer. "This high rate of unemployment forced the community to realize forestry was a priority area for job creation and economic development. Then we needed to come up with a plan to achieve our goals."

That's where the FNFP project came in. With funding from the Program, the community developed and signed an initial memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Kitselas First Nation and SCI, and identified additional potential joint venture opportunities in the forest management and value-added sectors. Another MOU regarding one of the identified opportunities was also developed.

With the assistance of the Skeena Native Development Society, the MOU allowed the Kitselas to develop a silviculture training program for nine community members. Direct award contracts for brushing and weeding were received from both SCI's Terrace Operations and West Fraser's Skeena Sawmills Division. These contracts proved to be an excellent learning opportunity for both the crew and their supervisors and have increased the community's capacity to accept further silviculture contracts from these and other companies in the Terrace area.

An additional and unexpected benefit of the MOU arose because of the close relationship and trust that was developed between the Kitselas community and SCI's staff. This resulted in a separate land use agreement being negotiated with SCI that requires them to pay an annual road use fee for hauling timber over Kitselas reserve lands.

Other economic opportunities that were examined with the FNFP funding included building a remanufacturing facility to upgrade low grade lumber, establishing a facility to process cedar fencing for the U.S. market, and initiating a program to recover specialty products from pre-graded low-value cedar and hemlock pulp logs. Establishing a cedar salvage operation to obtain cedar shake and shingle blocks and to manufacture short, clear lumber from the salvaged wood was also considered.

However, the most feasible opportunity appears to be a joint venture between Kitselas, SCI and the neighbouring Kitsumkalum First Nation to obtain the rights from the provincial government to a current undercut volume of approximately 250,000 m^3 from SCI's Tree Farm License #1. This would enable the Kitselas community to access sufficient fibre to justify expenditures in value-added manufacturing that would not otherwise be economically sound. It would also provide immediate employment opportunities in forest management and logging for community members. The initial agreement between the three parties to pursue this wood became the second MOU specified under the FNFP funding.

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Lil'wat Nation Follows its Vision for its Reserve Forests

Lyle Leo, CEO of Creekside Resources Inc., discusses work progress on trails at the Driftwood Bay Recreation Site with Crew Chief Linda Dan.

The Mount Currie First Nation, also known by its traditional name as Lil'wat, has been actively involved in forest management on its reserve lands since completing its first Forest Management Plan in 1987. Most of its 1800 members live on-reserve in the Pemberton Valley north of Whistler, and 50 percent of the residents are less than 25 years old; consequently, employment development and increased stewardship of the forests and other natural resources within its traditional territory remain strategic priorities for this community.

"Mount Currie is interested in sustainably managing the lands held within their Indian Reserves, as well as exploring other forestry-related business ventures," explains Mount Currie Councilor Lyle Leo, who is also CEO of the community's economic development corporation, Creekside Resources Inc.

Previous First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) support has allowed the community to develop a management plan for their woodlot license (a type of provincial forest land tenure), explore the feasibility of expanding an existing forestry-based industrial park on reserve lands, and initiate and implement joint ventures in logging and recreation site management with various partners.

"With the aid of FNFP support, substantial progress has been made in pursuing our identified forestry objectives," adds Leo.

However, there was a definite need recognized within the community to improve the management of their reserve lands (approximately 2800 ha) held outside of the woodlot license. Some inventories and silviculture work had been undertaken in the early 1990s, but no surveys had been carried out to determine the efficacy of the treatments or if further treatments were required.

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Nee Tahi Buhn Indian Band Sees Potential for Forestry Work

The Nee Tahi Buhn (meaning "a body of water" in Wet'suwet'en) Indian Band is located 23 kilometres south of Burns Lake, BC. Economic activities include both private and band-owned businesses including forestry, fishing and tourism related activities. When it comes to forestry, the community is very interested in providing band members with the opportunity to manage both the band's woodlot and reserve forestlands, as well as other off-reserve employment opportunities.

There are a few band members that do falling and bucking. However, they see a great potential for technical forestry and silviculture work, given that there are six major licencees and three forest districts within their traditional territory. In addition, there are opportunities for employment as a result of the explosion of the mountain pine beetle population within their traditional territory. To capitalize on this opportunity the band has recently partnered with 11 other bands in order to access a portion of the recently announced 350 000 m^3 harvest increase being advertised by the BC Ministry of Forests. To accomplish the necessary capacity building, and with support from the First Nations Forestry Program, band members will receive training in technical forestry fieldwork including inventory, silviculture surveys, and GPS traversing and beetle management.

As Chief Ray Morris explained, "After this on-the-job training has been completed, not only will these new technical forestry skills be used to do work on the reserve and woodlot, but also these individuals will be engaged for work for Carrier Forest Products Ltd. who have a new sawmill and will require technical forestry services." In addition, the Nee Tahi Buhn forestry crew will seek contract work with other area licensees.

Contact: Robert Russell, Natural Resource Coordinator, Nee Tahi Buhn Indian Band, (250) 694-3494.

Forestry crew members undergoing helicopter safety training.

Developing an Aboriginal

Some members of the FNFP Forest Opportunities Working Group (l-r): Gordon Prest, UBC; Bob Hart, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; Bill Dexter, BC Ministry of Forests; Ron Matthew, North Thompson Band; and Nello Cataldo, Canadian Forest Service.

In BC there are at least 217 forest-related businesses owned by First Nations and that number is expected to increase exponentially over the next decade. These businesses have common concerns unique to aboriginal forestry that will best be heard if represented by a single voice. Hence, the Aboriginal Forest Industries Council (AFIC) is being developed to advocate on behalf of aboriginal forest industry businesses.

The need for such an organization was recognized by the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) Management Board which established a subcommittee, the Forest Opportunities Working Group, to investigate the level of interest in establishing such a trade affiliation. In 2000, the group queried 283 bands, tribal councils, forest industry businesses, governments and individuals in BC. Results indicated that 90 percent of those surveyed were interested in developing such an organization. Therefore, in February of this year, representatives from aboriginal forest companies and communities met with federal and provincial governments at a workshop to discuss the development of AFIC.

"The overwhelming consensus at the workshop was that AFIC is needed to establish a supportive and collaborative climate for new and existing aboriginal forest businesses," says Nello Cataldo, Collaborative Forestry Program Manager at the Canadian Forest Service, Pacific Forestry Centre and member of the FNFP Forest Opportunities Working Group. "The objective is to develop an aboriginal council in BC that will represent First Nations business interests in provincial forest industry forums."

AFIC will not only act as a united voice on behalf of aboriginal forestry companies, but will serve as a networking and technical resource centre for both established and emerging businesses to share technical information, obtain assistance, or advise about business development, planning, and operations.

"It will be an opportunity to learn from each other," says Ron Matthew, a First Nations independent contractor in Barriere, BC and member of the FNFP Forest Opportunities Working Group. "For example, by talking about my experiences in setting up my business, I may be able to help someone understand some of the

Forest Industries Council

steps that are required. And I could learn about what did or didn't work for other businesses which may help me make decisions in my own business."

Besides networking, AFIC could provide or coordinate training, consulting, marketing, purchasing or any other forest-related activity that its members decide upon. It is expected to focus on capacity building and will address issues with province-wide implications such as working with governments to create business opportunities within traditional territories, communicating with the non-aboriginal corporate sector to form viable partnerships and joint ventures, and promoting potential markets and trade within Canada and internationally. AFIC will promote First Nations interests in botanical forest products for medicinal, spiritual and nourishment purposes. It will also promote sustainable land use management and the development of forest-products certification for culturally sensitive forest practices.

"Membership will include any aboriginal business involved in any forest-related business ranging from botanical forest products to sawmills," says Gordon Prest, First Nations Forestry Coordinator at the Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia (UBC) and member of the FNFP Forest Opportunities Working Group.

"Once AFIC has had time to build up its membership, structure and business constituency, it will be independent and self-governing."

Adds Cataldo, "Although the concept was initiated and supported through the First Nations Forestry Program, AFIC is to be an independent body with its own elected executive. The FNFP Forest Opportunities Working Group has been acting only as the temporary Board of Directors until an executive council is elected to formally launch the organization and continue to build and carry out the mandate."

This year, through support from the FNFP, AFIC will be registered as a non-profit society which will be apolitical and have no involvement with issues such as land claims. Much of this year's work will involve recruiting members, completing a strategic plan, determining the organizations goals, as well as organizing and delivering its first Annual General Meeting. Short-term goals might include being financially self-sufficient, developing a high profile throughout the province, increasing its membership, and becoming a well-respected professional organization.

For further information, check the website: http://www.aficouncil.org.

A grapple skidder hauling trees to a landing.

Okanagan Indian Band Develops Forestry Management Plan

The Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) is situated in the northern part of the OkanaganValley, just north of Vernon, BC. The band has the largest First Nation population amongst the Okanagan Tribal Council member bands. Its members have been active in forestry on- and off-reserve for many years working in logging, silviculture, and in mills. They presently have four members who have technical forestry and fisheries training, and one band member who is working on a Natural Resource Management Degree. In addition, the community has a couple of logging contractors, some of whom have their own logging trucks and logging equipment. Although there have been some on-reserve forestry activities such as brushing, spacing, pruning, and timber harvesting, there have not been sufficient opportunities to support year-round employment. A couple of years ago, the community decided to develop some direction when it came to managing their natural resources on-reserve. So, in 1999 the band, with support from the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), investigated opportunities to develop their own forestry department and complete some strategic forestry business planning. This strategic planning identified a further need to complete a Natural Resource and Forest Management Plan to formulate forestry planning goals. Therefore, this year, with support from the FNFP, the OKIB will complete a reserve land natural resource and forestry management plan that will provide the community with a management-planning tool.

Rob Hutton, Natural Resource Manager for the OKIB explained, "We want this plan to be community driven, community built, and community based. The information from this plan will be used as a springboard to revise the band's overall long-term natural resources plan that looks beyond their reserve lands and is more of a vision statement."

Okanagan forestry crew members collecting reserve forest inventory information for forest planning purposes.

Okanagan forestry crew members reviewing field work information.

Hutton goes on to explain that there is a strong interest in protecting the cultural aspects of their land. The cultural issues are going to show up as fundamental principles that drive natural resource plans, such as a forest management plan.

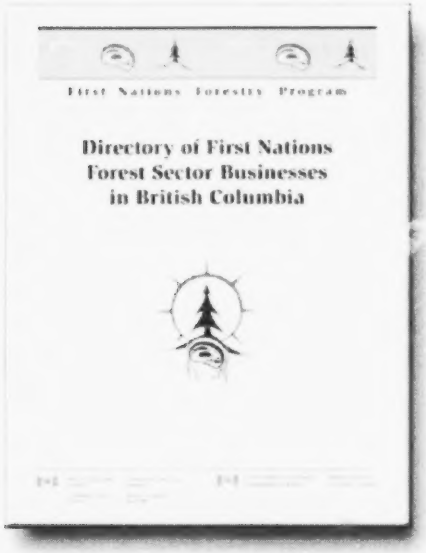
"For example, the band is concerned from a couple of perspectives when it comes to beetles," says Hutton. "Obviously the health of the forest is a concern, but also there are concerns from a cultural perspective. There is an interest by both the elders and youth to find ways to manage forest health risks in ways that minimize negative impacts on ongoing traditional uses, and special or sacred sites. This is a huge concern out there, which is why the community needs to set down some broad cultural principles that drive their resource plans."

Jeff Eustache, a forestry technician and the Project Foreman adds, "What makes this project unique is that the majority of the work is being done by First Nation community members and they are involved in all phases of the project with less dependency on outside consultants."

This forestry plan will allow the community to make informed future decisions regarding land use and its development.

Contact: Rob Hutton, Natural Resource Manager, Okanagan Indian Band, (250) 542-3444.

Directory of First Nations Forest Sector Businesses in BC



To "leaf" through a BC forest sector directory is to come across business names like Weyerhaeuser, TimberWest and Slocan. But now there is a new forest sector directory, one with names like Naut'sa mawt Resources Group Inc., Tl'etinqox Logging and Gwa'sala 'Nakwakda'xw Timber Corporation. The Directory of First Nations Forest Sector Businesses in British Columbia is a comprehensive list of First Nations-owned forest-related companies and enterprises in the province.

"There are numerous First Nations Forestry firms in BC but no one knows exactly how many or the range of businesses," says Art Shortreid, a First Nations Forestry Program Project Officer at the Canadian Forest Service, Pacific Forestry Centre in Victoria, BC. "This directory provides a list of 217 forest sector firms owned by First Nations as well as a brief description of each. It is expected that this list will serve as a networking tool among First Nations businesses and that the number of companies included in it will grow."

The directory is also a means for First Nations forestry companies to become more visible in the general forest sector and thus possibly broaden their access to the marketplace. Such visibility may also assist in establishing joint ventures or lead to possible funding opportunities for First Nations companies.

First suggested by the First Nations Forestry Program BC Management Board, the directory was also welcomed by organizations like the Council of Forest Industries (COFI) which represents over 100 BC forest companies and six trade associations. Many such organizations are very involved with aboriginal forestry but find it challenging to stay current with new developments among First Nations forestry companies.

The directory has a company list sorted alphabetically by name, address and contact, as well as a list sorted by First Nations band or Tribal Council affiliation, and another by geographic location. Companies are also listed by business activity which ranges from archaeological inventory assessment to woodlot ownership by band.

"The directory is a valuable resource for companies seeking First Nations expertise in a particular field," says Marlie Beets, Vice President of Aboriginal Affairs at COFI. "It also provides a means of gauging growth in aboriginal people's involvement in the forest sector, which is something that COFI members have supported for years."

Adds Shortreid, "This directory could also provide the Aboriginal Forest Industry Council (AFIC) with a baseline of companies with which to build membership. Although no decisions have yet been made, it is hoped that either AFIC or another organization will maintain an updated database of First Nations forestry businesses so future editions will always reflect changes in the sector."

The current directory of aboriginal forest companies was created by sending survey forms to all First Nations and Tribal Councils in BC as well as to Aboriginal Liaison Advisors at the BC Ministry of Forests regional and district offices. Individuals within BC First Nations communities verified data and provided additional entries.

The 335-page book, *Directory of First Nations Forest Sector Businesses in British Columbia* is available both in hard copy and in Adobe Acrobat through the Pacific Forestry Centre bookstore at http://bookstore.pfc.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca.

Working Towards Economic Stability Through Forestry (continued from Page 3)

"The impact of these initiatives for Kitselas will be substantial," says McDames. "They will help us achieve our community objectives of a healthy working community in terms of cultural renewal sustainability and recognition of our jurisdiction, increased capacity and economic flexibility and diversity."

Contact: Alfie McDames, Kitselas Community Economic Development Officer, (250) 635-5084.

Lil'wat Nation Follows its Vision for its Reserve Forests (continued fro.n Page 4)

With assistance from the FNFP this year, Mount Currie will address these needs and work with a local consultant to update and expand the inventory data, determine what treatments are required to manage lands that are presently under-utilized, and to initiate trials to determine appropriate hardwood management regimes (spacing, commercial thinning, pruning, fertilization, etc.). The information collected and the work performed may also be used to pursue certification of these lands under one or more of the existing certification processes used in BC.

A number of Mount Currie members will work with the consultant doing surveys and developing prescriptions for lands to be treated and undertaking any work prescribed. Mount Currie has technicians who will gain training in forest management, harvesting, and silviculture through this project. This work will also see a large number of young people in the 18-24 age bracket (where unemployment is the highest) receive training in forestry work. As a result, this project will provide the skills and work experience essential for Mount Currie to bid on silviculture contracts offered by major tenure holders working in their traditional territory.

"The emphasis of this project is to maximize crew time doing a variety of the tasks required for sustainable forest management," says Leo. "Major licencees, Ministry of Forests, and BC Hydro have expressed interest in using the services of Mount Currie on their individual operating areas within our traditional territory, so not only will we improve the management of our own lands, we will have increased employment opportunities for our young people as a result of the FNFP funding."

Contact: Lyle Leo, Chief Executive Officer, Creekside Resources Inc., (604) 894-6145.

First Nations Forestry Program Project List
(2001-2002 Fiscal Year)

Applicant	Community	Project Title	Board Approved
Aboriginal Forest Industries Council	Kimberley	Formation of the Aboriginal Forest Industries Council	$25,000
An Dsap Wilp Society	Takla Landing	Strategic Planning and Tenure Proposal	$25,000
Cape Mudge Band	Quathiaski Cove	Cape Mudge Band Stand Tending	$25,000
Douglas First Nation	Mission	Enhance FN Capacity to Sustainably Manage IR Forests	$24,950
Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation	Port Hardy	Forestry Program Enhancement Continuation	$25,000
Gwawaenuk Tribe	Port McNeill	Gwawaenuk Forest Management Project	$25,000
Homalco Indian Band	Campbell River	Forest Development Plan for Forest Licence A65197	$25,000
Kitkatla Band Council	Kitkatla	Kitkatla Forestry Project	$25,000
Kwikwetlem First Nation	Coquitlam	Forest Inventory and Community Training Project	$25,000
Lax Kw'Alaams Indian Band	Port Simpson	First Nation Skill Development	$25,000
Lhoosk'uz Dene Forest Company	Quesnel	Forest Technician Training	$25,000
Little Shuswap Indian Band	Chase	Squilax Wild Berry Products	$24,850
Looker Industries Ltd.	Ucluelet	Fibre Salvage Strategy and Economic Plan	$25,000
Lower Post First Nation	Lower Post	Marketing Study for Kaska Forest Products Ltd.	$25,000
Lytton First Nation	Lytton	Sawmill Operation Training	$25,000
Matsqui First Nation	Matsqui	Matsqui First Nation Site Rehabilitation and Bio-Solids Application	$25,000
Mount Currie Band	Mount Currie	Enhance FN Capacity to Sustainably Manage IR Forests and Lands	$25,000
Nee Tahi Buhn Indian Band	Burns Lake	Woodlot Management Mentoring Program	$24,930
Nicola Tribal Association	Merritt	Nicola Tribal Assoc. Forestry Project	$25,000
Okanagan Indian Band	Vernon	Natural Resources and Forest Management Plan	$25,000
Samahquam Band	Mount Currie	Samahquam Sawmill Project	$25,000
Secwepemc Natural Resource Board	Kamloops	Secwepemc Natural Resource Board, Strategic Implementation Dev.	$25,000
Secwepemc Natural Resource Society	Kamloops	Secwepemc Natural Resource Society Workshop	$5,000
Siska Indian Band	Lytton	Siska Band Community Forest Business Initiative	$25,000
Skeetchestn Indian Band	Savona	Cultural Heritage Survey and Inventory for Woodlot #1600	$23,420
Skidegate Forestry Society	Haida Gwaii	Haida Gwaii Cedar Oil Production Project	$12,500
Skway First Nation	Chilliwack	Forest Inventory, Opportunity Development, and Feasibility Project	$25,000
Soowahlie First Nation	Cultus Lake	Forest Restoration and Capacity Building Initiative	$25,000
Spallumcheen Band	Enderby	Spallumcheen Band Silviculture Training	$25,000
Spuzzum First Nation	Yale	Spuzzum Value Added Project	$12,500
St. Mary's Indian Band	Cranbrook	Integrated Resource Management Plan	$24,990
T'Sou-ke Nation	Sooke	Yellow Cedar Recovery Initiative	$25,000
Tseycum First Nation	North Saanich	Resource and Forestry Development Plan	$25,000
Tsleil-Waututh First Nation	North Vancouver	Forest Management Planning and Certification	$24,870

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